

## PART III

### THE FUTURE OF THE POLISH JEW



## CHAPTER

### SOME JEWISH CUSTOMS

#### RELIGIOUS CONSERVATISM

SOMEWHERE in the Talmud there is a story setting forth not only the necessity but the expediency of keeping the fifth commandment. According to it, the father of the family was asleep with his feet on the box when a man entered the house and proposed some business to the son. But the money which was necessary for the transaction was in the box, and the son, afraid to break the commandment by waking his father, sent the man away. Both father and son were in great distress about losing such a good opportunity, but the next day they were rewarded by a visit from another man with a still better offer. This time the father was awake, the box opened, and a large profit made. Both father and son attributed it to a sign of divine pleasure that the commandment had been kept, even under such great temptation. This reminds me of a far more recent story in connection with a pious Jewish family in Lodz. One Friday evening, just as the Sabbath had begun, a telegram arrived, and although the head of the house had good reason to believe that it was a business

offer from a foreign firm, refused to open it, in spite of the assurances of a visitor that it was no sin to read telegrams on the Sabbath. Next morning, Saturday, another telegram came, and again the visitor assured his host that, as the Law said nothing about telegrams, he would not break the Sabbath if he saw what was inside it. But his host was obdurate, and the family spent the day in speculations. On Saturday evening a third telegram arrived, and as the Sabbath was over the old merchant opened all three. His triumph was great when he read them, for the first contained a good offer, the second a better, and the third an excellent one, all from the same firm, who, supposing that the Jew did not answer because he did not think the offer good enough, had raised it each time. "You see," the old man said to his visitor, "the Law says nothing about telegrams, but the God of Israel has rewarded my piety with much gold! He who keeps the commandments shall ever prosper."

The religious conservatism of the Polish Jew is quite remarkable; and he shows it not only in the purely religious part of his customs, but in the traditional ones which have been instituted by the Talmud. To him it stands in the place of fatherland and nationality. Tell the really pious Polish Jew that his co-religionists in France or England have ceased to differ from the rest of the community in dress, speech and general mode of life, and he will retort that they are no longer Jews but freethinkers, who have deserted their faith, and only go

to the synagogue and eat *koszerny* out of affectation and a wish to be talked about. In his opinion, such men are not worthy to be called the sons of Israel. This conservatism causes an unlimited amount of friction between the old generation of the ghetto and the young, for the old looks upon the study of the Talmud as the only fit occupation for a pious Jew, and thinks of all modern ideas of a secular education with horror. It is difficult to understand the amount of consternation a young Polish Jew can cause among his family, especially the father be a Chassideen, by exchanging his long *halat* for a short coat of ordinary European cut and clipping his beard. It is quite equal to the feeling of shame experienced by a respectable English household if a son disgraces the family honour by forging somebody else's name. Hours spent in arguing with the unhappy parents fail to convince them that a boy does not merit being turned out of the house because, having learned the Talmud off by heart, he wants to read "worldly" books and get some idea of people and things around him. The fact that the same boy takes off his *halat* and puts on an ordinary coat when he goes abroad on business does not alter their views in the least. "He *must* take off his *halat* when he goes abroad, because he would look different from everybody else," they say.

"Then why on earth should he look different from everybody else when he is in Warsaw, or Radom, or Lodz?" the uninitiated asks.

"Because he is a Jew," is the reply. "And a Jew

*must* be different from everybody else. When my son has a *halat*, he will not walk in the gardens and parks for fear the police will search him."

"And why shouldn't he walk there if he wants to?"

"Why should he?" is the indignant retort. "His father never walked in the public gardens, and there is no reason why he should begin. Besides, if he leaves off his *halat* he will be going into the Polish cafés and eating *tryfny* food (not prepared according to the Jewish ritual), and then he will be utterly lost, and what will there be for us but shame and dishonour? We would not mind if he would wear a short coat under his *halat* for the sake of appearances. But he won't do that. What will all our friends and acquaintances say when they see him without his beard and his *halat*? I always told his father he would go wrong, that boy, for he's twenty-one, and won't hear of getting married."

Then follows a torrent of reproaches and real Hebrew despair for the prodigal son who wears a short coat and walks in the public gardens. As to the boy, he mourns the loss of the family circle from which he has been banished; being a Jew, he is sincerely attached to his home. But he borrows Polish books, and probably goes to lodge in a Christian household. To sympathisers he will confide his wish to learn something more than the Talmud can teach him, so as to become a "man" instead of a Jew in a long *halat*. In a short time he will either get baptized, or, what is far more likely to-day, become a Socialist and a freethinker. His parents will continue



to mourn him as worse than dead and hang their heads before their friends, who point out the scapegrace to their own sons as an example of the horrible fate which overtakes boys who read Polish books and refuse to marry.

### THE YOUNG RABBI

These Conservative Separatists, though dying out in the large towns, still flourish in the provincial settlements, where the *Kahals* are as averse to progress as the rest of the community. Their one ideal is the cult of the Talmud; and in order to devote their lives to that, they will starve themselves and their children, walk in rags and live in close, filthy hovels. Their ambition is to have a Rabbi for a son. He need not be such a Rabbi as those employed in the communal synagogues in the large towns. Far from it; the average provincial Jew looks upon those men who can speak and even write Polish with the utmost horror. By a Rabbi they mean a "master," that is a boy or man who knows the Talmud off by heart and can engage in controversy with other Rabbis, and vanquish their arguments about some question with a passage which puts it in quite another light.

The grave boys one sees in the ghettos, walking book in hand to a Bethamidrasz, are either *Rabbis* or prospective ones. From their earliest years they have been excluded from all that could influence them in favour of



worldly things. They have been kept away from the streets in which they might hear Polish spoken, never allowed to play with other children, or be children themselves. They were encouraged to talk of nothing but the Bible and the Talmud, which they are taught to read as soon as their baby intellects are capable of understanding the Hebrew letters.

If such a boy be a promising pupil, he is admitted to the discussion of wise men at the age of eight, and listens to the words of wisdom which fall from the Rabbis' mouths, whilst his less fortunate or duller brothers and cousins look on with a mixture of awe and envy.

The Polish Jew is carefully instructed in the Law and Ritual, and at thirteen he becomes of age. He is received with ceremony into the synagogue when his father pronounces a prayer over him in which he declares that, whereas he has hitherto taken all his son's sins upon himself, he is no longer responsible for them from that moment. He is then taken before some Rabbi, who examines him as to his knowledge of the Talmud, and decides upon the amount of dowry his future bride must bring, according to the extent of his knowledge of the sacred book. The boy must now observe the fasts of the Jewish year and perform the same religious duties as his father and other pious men. He must pray many times a day, before and after all meals, as well as in the morning, late in the afternoon, and in the evening. If he breaks his fast by eating a small piece of bread, he says a short prayer, both before and after. If he sits

down to a meal, he must say a long prayer. The morning, afternoon and evening prayers are still longer; in fact, if a Polish Jew means to be really pious he has little time for anything but saying his prayers and observing the different laws and rules the Talmud has laid down for the guidance of every moment of his life. Once the other Rabbis in the community are satisfied that he is able to take part in their discussions, and once he can hold his own with these elders and discover some new explanation of an obscure passage in the Talmud, his future is assured. He need never work. The hated factory, the sweating shop, and all kinds of manual labour, are spared him. Even if he have no home of his own he will always find some pious household wherein to eat, drink, pray, and sleep on a bug-infested bed. He will instruct the boys of the family in the Talmud and be treated with unbounded respect; for all pious Jews will look up to him, and those who have given themselves over to secular things will not be admitted within his circle. No matter how ragged and dirty he is; no matter if he has no idea of anything outside the Talmud; if he is incapable of earning a farthing, he will be sought after by parents with daughters to marry, for he is a Rabbi, knows the Talmud off by heart, has a very long and dirty beard, and wears a *hañat* to the ankles. If he goes on as he has begun, and has a roof and his daily food assured him, he may possibly become a very great Rabbi indeed, like the master of Gora Kalvaryja (a settlement a few miles from Warsaw), who died a year

or two back full of years and honours. This Rabbi was known by the Jews throughout the Russian Empire. Thousands used to flock to hear him expound the Talmud. He was surrounded with a certain amount of pomp. Four servants, all wise and honourable men, waited upon him incessantly, and those who saw them say that a prince of the blood could not be better served than this Jew of a Polish village. He had his own councillor, a rich iron-founder from Warsaw, who used to go and advise him upon matters in connection with the management of his flock once every week. When a young Jew gave promise of great wisdom, he was taken to Gora Kalvarya. A man once told me that, having learnt the Talmud by heart at the age of thirteen, he was destined for a Rabbi and taken to see the wise man. One mark of favour was to receive a small piece of food from his own hands, and as he was breaking his fast, he gave the boy a piece of bread. The young Rabbi was in a predicament, for he had not yet said his morning prayer, and yet could not refuse to eat the bread the master had given. After vainly ransacking his memory for a passage in the Talmud to guide him, he determined to eat the bread and see what would happen. As he was not struck down by a terrible disease or otherwise punished for his sin, he began to make other experiments of the same kind, of course without saying anything to anybody. Before long he horrified his friends by declaring he would not be a Rabbi, took off his long *halat*, went abroad, learnt gardening, and finally became the

first skilled Jewish gardener in Poland. He taught two other Jews, and employs them in a Jewish cemetery. Needless to say, all the Conservatives in the Commune hold him in horror, and affirm that he is well punished because his two Jewish assistants brought revolutionary ideas among his non-Jewish workmen and organised a gardeners' strike.

### MARRIAGES

In the Polish ghetto a girl of twelve and a boy of thirteen must think of getting married. If the boy happen to be a Rabbi, or rather to give promise of becoming one, there is little difficulty about it; his parents will be besieged with offers from people who either have no sons of their own at all or else none with Talmudistic capabilities. When the boy happens to be an acknowledged Rabbi, he can generally ask whatever dowry he likes, for he is the best match in the settlement, and he knows it. After a suitable wife has been found the parents arrange about the dowry, which is paid, as soon as the engagement is completed, to the boy's parents. There are three separate copies of the contract, which is drawn up in such a way that the boy, his father and the girl's father must all agree to its withdrawal from whatever business it is invested in before the money can be touched. These contracts are placed in some Jewish bank, and the engagement is looked



upon as settled. If, however, it is broken off within the year, the bride must return any presents she has received, and the side which breaks off must pay all the costs of the betrothal. Any disputes which arise are tried before the *Kahal*, which pronounces judgment.

During the year of the engagement the betrothed pair do not see each other; in fact, they generally make each other's acquaintance on their wedding day, and whilst they are engaged the young man is supposed to solely frequent the society of his own sex. The parents make all arrangements, often without consulting their children.

When a Polish Jew marries one of his daughters his great idea is to get all the world to know about it. Now-a-days the announcement of a Jewish engagement often appears in the Polish papers, especially those in Jewish hands, which tell all it may concern that Icek Morningstar of Lodz is betrothed to Rachel Finechild of Radom, or words to that effect. But the Jew of the ghetto cares nothing for Polish papers—neither he nor his friends can read them; so he sticks to the good old custom of having the ceremony in front of the synagogue. As this is impossible in a large town, a courtyard is chosen instead. The religious part of the ceremony is the same as if it were held in a synagogue, but according to the Talmud any learned man can perform it. In fact, at one time no religious ceremony was necessary at all. It was sufficient for a boy to give a girl any trifle, such as



a small piece of money, or a piece of bread; if she accepted it, she was his wife. In cases where the girl had rich parents the custom was so much abused that witnesses were considered necessary to make a marriage valid, because a boy would go to his bride's parents and startle them with the news that he had married their daughter and was coming to live with them.

The orthodox ghetto marriage takes place in the evening, and by the light of lanterns which the chief guests hold. All the world and his wife are there; the bride's parents make every effort to astonish them with the richness of the reception and general arrangements, so that a family will be half starved for weeks before and after the wedding in order that the feast may include some dainty or a bottle of wine. The bride, with a cloth over her eyes, is brought by her parents into the courtyard where the ceremony is to take place and the bridegroom by his. The guests then sing and dance whilst the young couple make each other's acquaintance—that is, the bride's eyes are uncovered whilst somebody asks her if the young man pleases her. When she answers in the affirmative, her hair is shaved off close to her head, hops are thrown over her for prosperity, and the Rabbi performs the religious part of the ceremony, during which the bridegroom breaks a glass. After this, the marriage feast is eaten, the newly married pair being conducted thither with songs and noisy manifestations of joy.

After the feast the bride and bridegroom are conducted to a separate room and locked up in it for some time, whilst the guests dance and sing. When the Jews are very pious, the men and girls do not dance with each other; each sex has a part of the room to twirl round in to the accompaniment of music which has very little melody about it. The elder men stand in one group, looking on, and the women in another.

There is often a clause in the marriage contract which states the length of time the young pair is to live with the parents of each; but as a rule they live with the bride's parents until the father-in-law sees what the boy is fit for, whether he will be a Rabbi, a factor or a merchant, etc. It not unfrequently happens that a boy leaves his wife and children after he has been married a few years to live in one of the Bethamidrashes and study the Talmud, free from all domestic cares, or runs away from home to exchange his *hañat* for a short jacket and learn something of the world outside the ghetto. If his wife is of a pious stock she will not receive him into her father's house again, and a divorce is the usual consequence. Considering that such couples often have a family of half-a-dozen children before either is twenty-five, that they live with one and often two families of equal dimensions in one room, that they rarely get sufficient food to keep body and soul together, it is not surprising that the physical condition of the larger part of the Jewish emigrants leaves a great deal to be desired.

## SHAVING THE WOMEN'S HEADS

There is a difference of opinion about the origin of this custom. The Talmud says that when a woman is married she has no business to please any man, as her mission in life is fulfilled, and since a woman's hair is her beauty, she must hide it. The original order appears to have been to cover it with a close-fitting cap. But later on, as the material with which it was to be covered is not specified, the Polish Jewesses began to wear wigs on their shaved heads. Some old Jewesses wear close-fitting caps to-day. Of course the progressive Jews, even in the ghetto, do not make their wives shave their heads; all that are a little bit educated have dropped the custom altogether, and it is, like the very long *halats* of the men, a sign that the wearer belongs to a pious family. Another version of the origin is that a Jew must never have his hands soiled by grease, and that, as his wife's hair is greasy and he cannot always be washing his hands, the best way out of the difficulty is to make all brides shave their heads.

## POSITION OF WOMEN

The position of the women in a pious Jewish household is rather paradoxical. A strict Jew will not sit down to eat with his wife or take food

from a woman's hands. In other households, less orthodox, the fathers and sons sit down first and are served by the women, who eat afterwards. In others again, the two sexes eat together, but the men sit on one side of the table and the women on another. Other distinctions are made. For instance, in the provincial settlements, the men and boys go to the "house of prayer," as the synagogues are there called, before the women and girls. In the large communal synagogues they attend the same service, but stand in different parts of the building. The men are exempt from bathing, unless they like it, but it is the business of the *Kahals* to see that women of the community observe the commands relating to the *mykva*, or ritualistic bath. On the other hand, the women take a small part in the religious life of the really pious Jewish household. They are not supposed to say many of the prayers; they do not wear the *tephilen*, or the Laws of Moses written on parchment and strapped on the head and arms, as the men do when praying on week-days. These *tephilen* are also fixed to the doors of their rooms. The origin of the custom will be found in Deuteronomy, ch. vi., which says: "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets before thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

But at the Feast of Tabernacles, called *Kutki* in Poland, the women often take offerings of an apple, a piece of willow and of palm to the house of prayer.



During the seven days of this feast, which lasts from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of October, the Jews in the Polish ghettos and settlements may be seen sitting in queer little tents usually made out of rags, with the top open to the sky or the ceiling of the room according to the state of the weather. The women often sit in them too. But in pious households, the men and women do not share the same tents. The days are passed in praying, and the food eaten there. This custom is observed as a reminder of the time when the Children of Israel were brought out of Egypt and had slept in tents in the wilderness. While the feast lasts the Jewish shops are shut and no work or business done, except for a few hours once or twice during the week, when it is a "free holiday," that is, one on which they can do a little buying or selling.

The Talmud allows a man to beat his wife if she curses him or makes light of his parents. The *Kahals* used to have the power of imprisoning a man who beat his wife wrongfully. To-day, they can only reason with, or, at the most, excommunicate him.

In practice, the domestic arrangements of the pious Jew work out rather differently. If he is progressive he does not keep so strictly to the laws laid down in the Talmud for the regulation of his home life, and will not hesitate to sit down at the same table with her, allow her to use his chair, etc. ; whereas, if he be a pious man, devoted to the Talmud and the contemplation of its obscure teachings, his wife has to work for him and



their numerous children. Once in possession of the purse-strings, she rules the household, and not unfrequently relieves her feelings by throwing the wise man's soup at his head instead of letting one of her sons serve him with it. The wives of these Rabbis are generally hardworking, energetic women, and a Jewess who does a factor's work in one of the settlements, or hawks and sells things in the Jewish quarters, almost invariably has a pious husband at home or in some Bethamidrasz. Her children when old enough will help her, and as a rule the father wants for nothing as long as he lives, and the chances are ten to one that his first-born son will follow in his footsteps and find a wife to work for him. His happiest days are spent in waiting upon other wiser men, or giving advice upon important questions to some great Rabbi.

#### DIVORCE

According to the Talmud, polygamy is lawful; but the Rabbinats have long since altered this law, and now a man may not have more than one wife at a time. But it is very easy for him to get rid of her. The Law says, "When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."

This means is very frequently used among the Jews in Poland and for trivial reasons, when a man is free of his father-in-law's roof and has grown tired of the wife his parents chose for him when he was thirteen. Often an irate husband will go to the communal Rabbinate and demand a writing of divorcement, as it is still called, because his wife gave him food with flies in it or put too much salt in his soup. The Rabbinate generally tries to dissuade the petitioner from his intention, but cannot legally refuse him the writing if he proves that his complaints are well grounded. Once in possession of the piece of parchment, all the husband has to do is to thrust it into his wife's hands or even throw it into her arms. When divorced, she is entitled to half of her dowry; but as the marriage contract is made out according to the religious law, and by this a dowry cannot exceed the equivalent to thirty pounds of English money, her husband is not obliged to give her back more than fifteen pounds. A widow is entitled to the same amount on the death of her husband. The Russian authorities do not make any difficulties about confirming the decision of the Rabbinate, and so divorce is excessively easy for the Polish Jew—though as a matter of fact cases are comparatively rare among the educated classes. But when a man, divorced in the above way, wishes to marry again, he must get the consent of the Rabbinate in order to do so, and this gives the latter a good deal of influence in petitions. If both sides wish to divorce, the matter is very simple indeed, and neither has any

difficulty about getting married again. A woman can get divorced from her husband against his will if she can prove that he engages in any dishonourable or objectionable trade which she did not know of before her marriage; if he is suffering from any objectionable disease; if his breath is unsavoury; if he often turns her out of the house; if he has a very bad temper; and lastly, if he beats her: "For," the Talmud says, "it is not seemly that a Jew should beat his wife."

#### OTHER CUSTOMS

The Polish Jew was very much attached to his long locks of hair, or *peasy*, which he wore on each temple in obedience to the command:—"Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard." For many centuries he walked about with these locks, which often reached as far as the knees. But about ten years ago the Russian Government thought seriously of making him look like other people whether he wished or not, and issued orders that men in *halats* were not to walk in the parks and public gardens, and that those who insisted on wearing *peasy* should have them cut off by the police. In their zeal the authorities often had the skirts of the *halats* cut off as well; but the *peasy* were got rid of by arresting their wearers, taking them to the nearest police-station, and clipping the long strands of hair.

Modern ideas penetrate even into the Polish ghetto, and, in the large towns at any rate, many old customs are slowly dying out from among a certain portion of the Jewish community, although others observe them as religiously as ever. The remarkable part of it is that they manage to keep the letter of the law whilst disregarding the spirit, and seem perfectly satisfied that they have done all that the Talmud requires of them. For instance, a Jew is forbidden to transact business or touch money on the Sabbath ; but almost every Jewish factor will take money on Saturday provided his fingers do not touch it except through a piece of stuff, paper, or a corner of his *halat*.

On the day of *Roszhaszan* the pious Jews are supposed to bathe in a stream of running water in order to cleanse themselves from all their sins. The idea of the command is to bathe in pure water, but the average devotee does not pay attention to this so long as the water is not still, but a running stream. The same thing is to be seen with the *mykva*, or ritualistic bath, which was instituted with the idea of cleansing the bather, who, however, simply gets into the water and out of it again. In the large and progressive Communes the executive committees wage war with this ignorance, which precludes the possibility of the people becoming more hygienic, that is, of attaining the real end implied in all these commands about bathing and purifying. But in the smaller ones it is a case of the blind leading blind. The *Kahals* are as averse to cleanliness as the



rest of the community, so that dirt and disease reign supreme.

A strict Jew will not eat *Tryfny*, that is, food which has not been prepared according to the prescribed rites. But almost every Polish Jew will drink water out of a glass in a Christian house, whereas he would not touch an earthenware mug or a cup. The fact that it has been washed by non-Jewish hands does not seem to trouble him. When he is about to eat a small piece of bread and fish, he must say a short prayer and just dip the tips of his fingers in water. But if he intends to take several mouthfuls, he must say a much longer prayer and immerse his hands in water as far as the wrists. In the railway stations in Poland the Jews can be seen wetting the tips of their fingers by putting them upon the frosty windows until the ice is melted, when they eat a small piece of bread or a mouthful of egg.

He may not buy bread from a non-Jewish baker unless the latter has a certificate from the communal Rabbinate that his flour is clean and free from all impurities, and has not come in contact with lard or any other fat. The Conservative Jews will not buy it even then, in spite of the safeguard that flour spoils as soon as it is moistened with grease. At Passover he eats *maca*, or thin cakes baked out of special flour. The wheat is carefully watched by men sent by the Rabbinate whilst still in flower. These men look after it day and night lest a shower come and wet it, when



it is unfit for its purpose. They do not let it out of their sight until it is put into sealed bags, ready threshed under their watchful eyes. The *maca* is baked by men only—women may not touch it. It consists of flour and water, without salt, and is eaten for seven days instead of ordinary bread.

The Sabbath is ushered in with singing and prayers. The hymn used at the table on these occasions is known as the *Maiufez* (How beautiful thou art). When the family can afford it, the table is lighted with silver or bronze candlesticks, with many branches. The day is spent in religious exercises and prayer at a Bethamidrash, from which the women are excluded.

A book could be filled with an account of the many customs which still keep the Polish Jew a man apart from the rest of the population. Some of them are only strange, others absolutely repulsive. The educated Jews make all the efforts possible to dissuade their co-religionists from practising them, but as yet they are clung to with a tenacity peculiar to the Hebrew. Such men cannot distinguish between the religious observances ordered by the Mosaic Law and the traditions to be found in the Talmud, traditions which often have no better authority than some long-deceased Rabbi who thought fit to write them, and which, however necessary they may have been at one time, are quite at variance with modern conditions, and only serve to keep their observers wrapt in ignorance and superstition. But when the more progressive members of the com-

munity attempt to abolish them they are met with a considerable amount of resistance. Nothing is so clung to as the rites and ceremonies in connection with the

### BURIAL OF THE DEAD

The dreary Jewish cemetery, with its flat tombstones, is always apart from those belonging to peoples of other faiths. No matter how small or poor it is, it contains a building from which the Polish passer-by turns with disgust and the educated Jew with horror.

When a Jew is sick to death, a Rabbi is called in to give him what comfort he can for his last moments. As soon as the breath is out of his body, the relations do their utmost to have the corpse removed as soon as possible. Russian law says that a body must lie three days before the coffin is closed; but the Jews take the risk of breaking it, and when a doctor has pronounced life to be extinct, remove it to the cemetery in a closed bier, which looks like a huge box on a platform of black wood. The friends and acquaintances follow it, but only the nearer relations enter the mysterious building. The others wait outside.

In the provincial cemeteries the room into which the corpse is taken is of the simplest description. A large table stands in the middle, supplied with a trough. The body is stripped and placed on it; and, if the deceased was a very pious man, water, the quantity of which is

prescribed by the Talmud, is thrown over his remains, whilst his friends say prayers for him. If there are fewer than ten people, the prayers are said to be of no avail, just as an oath witnessed by less than three persons, or one Rabbi, is invalid.

After the water has been poured over the corpse, an india-rubber tube is placed in the mouth, clean water pumped into it and the stomach pressed with wooden instruments like rolling-pins. This and syringes are used until the water which leaves the body is quite clear. Meanwhile, other women are busy sewing linen grave-clothes, which must be made near the corpse. The piece from which they are made cannot be cut. If the deceased were a man and pious, he is also dressed in the shirt worn by him during the great fast—the Day of Judgment. His hair and beard are then combed, his finger and toe nails carefully cleaned, and short sticks placed between his fingers, so that when the last trump calls him from his grave he will have something with which to raise his body. Gloves are then put on, a new earthenware basin broken, and two pieces placed over his eyes, lest he should see what is happening in the grave. After this the body is enveloped in a shroud, made of linen for men and thick tulle for women, taken out into the cemetery and put into the grave. No coffin is used, but if a man is a first-born son, double planks of wood are placed at each of his sides and over him; if not first-born, the planks are single. No wood is put under the body, in order that it may be in direct contact with

the earth. A bag of earth is also placed under his head in return for his life-work. The grave is then filled up, and the ceremony completed with prayers.

When a Polish Jew dies abroad and his remains are brought into the country for burial, the coffin is put into the grave without being opened, as Russian law forbids all coffins coming into the country to be touched. Often the *Kahal* makes a lot of difficulty about burying people in this way, and the heirs of the deceased have to pay a large fine before the coffin is admitted into the cemetery at all. There is a tradition among the Polish people that in such cases the authorities in the smaller Communes exhume the bodies at night, perform all the ceremonies just described, and replace them coffinless in their graves.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FUTURE—CONCLUDING REMARKS

THE growing power of the Bund, with its nationalistic theories and the general awakening of the Jewish masses, have caused even the Poles, little given to worrying about problems of the kind, to ask themselves whether the Jewish masses will assimilate, or whether they really mean to become a separate nation, with their own culture of the hated Jargon and their own aims and aspirations, to be a veritable and constant thorn in the flesh to Slavonic sensibilities. Unhappily, the Poles know very little about the strangers who have been living with them for the last nine centuries, and it is therefore chiefly among the educated Jews that men and women qualified to speak about the future prospects of their race in Poland are to be found. The following opinions were given by the representatives of three groups, each with its own theory; and as all three work among the people of whom they speak, they may safely be considered as the best authorities on a very complicated question.

## THE FIRST SPEAKER

looks upon the question from an impartial point of view. I may add that he is a member of one of the Socialistic parties mentioned in Part II., and is considered an excellent judge of the Jewish question. He does not deny that separatism is strong among the Jewish masses, and says—

“Once this fact is admitted, two questions arise in connection with it:

“(1) *Is this separatism an unbreakable social law?* and

“(2) *Will not its very existence render any assimilation of the Polish and Jewish elements impossible by reason of the class and cultural antagonism which exist at present?*

“We must first of all look into the causes which have produced this antagonism.

“There is not the least doubt that, in spite of the difficulties which the process of assimilation has had to encounter, in spite of the superstitions, oppression and legislative restrictions which have widened the breach between them and the rest of the community, cultured Jews always tend, and still tend, to draw near to the nations among which they live.

“Such groups, by virtue of the natural laws of assimilation and by force of common interests, gradually lose their distinctive characteristics until nothing remains of

them but their religion and a few traces of their old culture.

“But with the masses we see a very different state of things. They preserve their distinctiveness of language and of custom. It would, however, be difficult to deny that, even here, assimilation has been, and still is, doing something. These masses have not been living in a complete state of cultural inertia. They have learned something from their surroundings. But the process has been so slow that it has evolved a strange, incongruous ethnical material, which is totally different from ancient Hebrew culture and still less like that of the community which surrounds it. You cannot possibly call the result a Jewish nation; it is nothing of the sort. It is rather a Jewish people, consisting of uncultured, unhappy masses, exclusive in their internal existence, cast off by the rest of the community, and yet a part of it, rooted into and unrootable from the soil in which they have not been allowed to develop normally.

“The Jews are not to blame for this separatism. Accidents of history, fatal to them, have caused it. The feudal system of the Middle Ages surrounded them with a wall of contempt and isolation. On the one hand, the social conditions and theories of the period made them a caste apart, a caste of merchants and middlemen; on the other, religious hatred persecuted and tortured them with all the cruelties that human inventiveness could conceive. They were obliged to engage in commerce and usury, and, as the theories of the times, most clearly

expressed in the doctrines of the Fathers of the Church, held all commerce in contempt, they bore the *odium* of a calling which they were forced to adopt. In Western Europe fanaticism and ignorance pursued them until the end of the eighteenth century. In Poland they were more fortunate for some time, because they were not, as in other countries, the property of the kings, but formed a separate people, enjoying a liberal autonomy.

"The Polish Republic had no middle class, and needed one; so, in opening the gates of its towns to the burghers who came from other countries, it received the Jews who had been driven from the German ghettos. The political and religious toleration which prevailed in Poland until the middle of the seventeenth century assured them a complete cultural and religious liberty. But even then there was scarcely any tendency towards assimilation, because here, too, class distinctions formed an obstacle to the assimilation of any foreign elements. The condition of the Jews grew worse in the seventeenth century, when the towns became impoverished and the effects of reaction, civil war, and strife began to be felt throughout the country. They suffered terribly from the Cossack rebellions, whilst the kings, whose power was rapidly falling, were unable to enforce the statutes by which their quondam *protégés* had once profited.

"During a century and a half—that is, from the middle of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century—the condition of the Jews grew rapidly worse; their poverty and ignorance increased, and their misfortunes



were multiplied. The consequence was that they separated further than ever from the rest of the community.

"The Four-years' Diet undertook the task of reforming their civil position, as it hoped to reform all classes and elements in the Republic.

"Butrymovicz's memorial—he was president of the Commission appointed to consider the Jewish question—was drawn up with the hope of assimilating them with the rest of the community. The Commission took a most liberal point of view, wishing to make them true citizens of the State by removing their disabilities and giving them civil responsibilities.

"There is historical evidence that many of the Jews themselves shared these hopes, whilst the part played by them in Kosciuszko's rising, and the fact that Berek Joselowicz, a Jew, raised a regiment, prove that even then there were Jews who considered themselves a part of the Polish nation. The fall of Poland arrested, or, at least, seriously impeded, this new development; but from this time we find that the idea of co-citizenship did not cease to exist.

"I believe that the simplest way in which to settle the Jewish question—that is, to bring about assimilation—is to treat it from a humane and perfectly just standpoint. The anti-Semite has widened the breach with his hatred and persecutions; and it is only fair to add that the Sionist, with his separatism and eccentricities, has done as much harm. Neither the one

nor the other has succeeded in curing the disease, because both have only torn open old wounds. They want to do what is sociologically an impossibility, that is, to take the Jews away from the communities in which they are living. What we ought to do is to stamp out and uproot all hatred and prejudices against the Jews, to wipe out all contempt for their uncultured masses, and to try to expiate our historical sins, persecutions and wrongs.

“We are now in a position to answer our two questions—

“(1) *Under normal conditions of development, which have hitherto been lacking in Poland as far as the Jewish problem is concerned, this separatism would be weakened to a considerable extent, because it is not an unbreakable social law, but the result of historical isolation, of persecution, and of want of culture.*

“(2) *The existence of this separatism would not make it impossible for the two elements to unite in common aims and interests, so long as a humane point of view and principles of justice were employed in our relations with the Jewish masses.*

“I will add that, with the exception of Poland, the Russian Empire, Galicia and Roumania, the Jewish question does not exist as far as cultural separatism is concerned.

“In Germany, it is true, semi-official anti-Semitism exists; in Austria, and especially in Vienna, it prevails

to a great extent ; in France, nationalism organised the anti-Dreyfus cabal. But these are forms of official and political intrigue, and the question, in the real sense of the term, does not and cannot exist. It is only apparent antagonism, far weaker, as a matter of fact, than the class antagonism which is going on in the same countries.

“There was a time when anti-Semitism grew silent in Poland also. Four or five decades ago, the two elements united under the watchword of brotherhood. It broke out afresh under the heavy yoke of reaction, and was met with another kind of reaction, of the Jewish element, which took the form of Sionism and Jewish nationalism.

“To-day, when we have had time to look at these two movements quietly, neither of them presents very dangerous qualities. Sionism is an abortive theory—for it does not take the Jews from the Land of Tribulation to the Land of Promise. As to Jewish nationalism, it is nothing more than a very natural answer to anti-Semitism, and will fall to pieces as soon as the theory of union of the two elements has become a fact.

“But the way in which the Jews are defending themselves at present is the best proof of what persecution, contempt and civil disabilities can effect. These same people, who bore oppression and hatred with the mildness of lambs for so long, have suddenly changed into men and are fighting in their self-defence with an energy which awakes wonder. Nobody supposed that those people

who seemed to be resigned to their fate as slaves of the ghetto, socially and legally oppressed, would rise and fight with such courage. But these efforts have nothing in common with nationalism. These outbursts of anger will subside as soon as the future lies clear and straight before them, as soon as they are citizens with the same rights as the rest of the community. Then the separatism of the masses will be wiped away; but it must last so long as disabilities, to say nothing of the contemptuous and hostile treatment from the anti-Semitic part of the community, last. This aiming at a separate culture is simply the result of separatist treatment from the other element. The Jews, unable to develop after the pattern of the culture which surrounds them, and equally unable to obtain real toleration, instinctively defend themselves by adopting their own means of cultural development. One thing remains to be considered, and that is the ignorance of the Jewish masses, an ignorance which goes side by side with abject poverty and boundless misery.

“I know you will say that the Jewish question chiefly concerns the poorest members of the Jewish community, and that the theory of assimilation cannot break through their ignorance nor make any headway in the face of the hunger and privations these people perpetually suffer. But here we have the prospect of help from the masses of the Polish community, of the solidarity of the two proletariats, which, drawn together by common interests and hardships, will gradually lose all separatist feelings.



“In a word, the Jewish question in Poland is, in my opinion, a question of the moment—a question of evolution. The prospect of a new form of political life is bound up with the emancipation of the Jews. This new state of things must inevitably sweep away all differences, and assimilation will follow as a natural consequence.”

#### THE SECOND SPEAKER,

a man who has done and is still doing good work for the Polish and Jewish communities, is an assimilated Jew, advocates assimilation and accuses the Sionists and the Jewish nationalists of acting in direct opposition to the real welfare of the Jewish masses in Poland. He says—

“The chief elements necessary for the making of a nation are territory, a living language, and culture—all of which must be the nation’s own.

“The first national element which the Jews lack is territory. Neither have they their own living language. They generally speak the languages of the nations among which they live—German, French, English, etc. In Poland the minority feel, think, and make themselves understood in Polish; the majority speaks a language they adopted during the long period they passed on German soil.

“The third element is an individual culture, and includes religious faith, manners and customs, legislative

and political organisations, education. That part of culture which we call religious faith belongs entirely to the Jews. But when we come to manners and customs, even in those which are quite connected with their religion, we find that many of them differ from those of their co-religionists who inhabit different countries. Dress also comes under the heading of culture. But here, too, we shall look in vain for any uniformity. The Polish Jew, with his *halat*, once forced upon him by law, differs equally from the average Jewish workman in France, with his blue blouse; from the middle-class Jew in England, with his felt hat and morning coat; and the Turkish Jew in his loose trousers and red fez. As to legislative and political organisations—the Jewish people live under the political and legislative conditions of the nations among which they live. The same must be said of their educational standard.

“But the Sionists and the Jewish nationalists in Poland and Russia affirm that the Jews are a nation and defend their nationality, in spite of the fact that they lack the three chief elements. This way of defending Jewish nationalism, *i.e.* by affirming that it exists, is employed almost *entirely* by the Polish and Russian Jews. But he who will decide for or against the existence of a Jewish nation cannot confine himself to those Jews who live upon what once belonged to the Polish Republic, for they only form one half of the Jews at present living on the earth's surface. But even if we judge of the Jews here apart from those in other parts of the world, great

doubts arise as to whether they can be said to possess the necessary national elements. Their most marked characteristic is their religious conservatism, which serves to strengthen separatism. One instance will be found in the way in which they cling to the long beard and the locks of hair (*peasy*).

“As a nation, they also had their national dress. But history tells us that in Poland during the Piast dynasty they wore the national dress of the Poles, and that in the Jagiellon dynasty, in obedience to a law passed in order to separate them from the rest of the community, they wore a distinctive form of dress. Therefore, neither the long beards and *peasy*, the results of a badly-understood religious law, nor yet the *halat*, is a national characteristic. The *halat* is looked upon by the Jew who wears it as his own, and he clings to it with a tenacity which only proves his ignorance. One can compare him to a slave who has grown so used to his fetters and his bondage that he is ready to fight to the bitter end with all who try to take away his chains, which he thinks belong to him, and are his birthright given by God.

“The most important national element is language. The Jewish Separatists tell us that the Jewish masses speak their own language. There is historical evidence that the Jews settled in Germany as early as the fourth century after Christ. They did not immigrate into Poland until the tenth century, when they brought with them a corrupt Jargon, a bad form of German,

revolting to all ethical sense of sound and unworthy of the sons of Israel.

“And as neither the black *halat*, the long beard and *peasy*, nor the Jargon belong to the national characteristics of the Jews in Poland, in what do these characteristics consist? How are the nationalists going to make out a case of these proofs of ignorance, superstition and conservatism?

“Besides, will it be convenient and practicable to acknowledge the Jews in Poland and Russia as a separate nation, or will it be good for Jewish interests? And here again we must put the question of language first, as the most important national element. Doctor Arthur Ruppin, a great authority on the Jewish question, says that the Jargon has no literary development before it. His words are—‘The Jewish Jargon does not lend itself to the expression of elevated thoughts.’ And who of the friends of the Jewish masses would wish to give them a language which cannot serve them in the expression of their elevated thoughts? I suppose only those who do not consider them capable of high thinking and would like to tie them down with the fetters of the jargon. But there are other considerations of the value of the Jargon as a national language. In permitting it to be and remain their national language, the Jews run a risk in using a German form of speech whilst living among a Slav people. It is not surprising that all that is German awakens hatred in the hearts of the Poles, for a deadly struggle has been going on



between the two for centuries, and whereas, with the progress of culture, it will be easy for the Jew in Poland to pass from his Jargon to German, it will be far more difficult for him to leave it for the Polish language. This is why the Poles fear that they will see German theatres, newspapers and schools established in their midst by the Jewish population which lives on their territory. Even in ordinary times this would be distasteful to the Poles; but in the event of war with Germany this resentment would probably be fanned to a terrible extent and result in the most unfortunate consequences for the Jewish population. History shows us how much the Jews in Posen and Galicia have been attracted by German culture. Once the Jargon was sanctioned as a national language any liberal-minded government would establish elementary, middle and higher schools, with Jargon teachers, to say nothing of Jargon lectures in the Universities and polytechnics, so that a certain amount of distrust would grow up between the two nations, the Polish and Jewish, living on the same territory, and it is doubtful if this would lead to the well-being of the Jews.

“The ignorant Jewish masses do not realise this, but the same excuse cannot be made for their leaders, who tell them: “Why, the Jargon is yours! You have a right to it! Defend it with all your might! Don’t let it be taken away from you, for it is your pride and your national property! The Sionists, on the other hand, understand all the hideousness of the Jargon.

They again want millions of young Jews and Jewesses to worry their brains learning a difficult and strange language, namely Hebrew. It is absurd of them to wish people living in the twentieth century to adopt the century's culture through the medium of the language of Moses, David and Isaiah. The language of the Old Testament, with little more than 4,000 words, cannot possibly supply the needs of philosophy, science and sociology which man has created during the 2,000 years and more which have elapsed since Hebrew ceased to be a living language, and only a living language can adapt itself to development and enlargement. As far back as 500 years before the birth of Christ it ceased to be their national language, and was but the ancient language of the Scriptures, which had been replaced in everyday life by that of the Chaldeans. During the first centuries of the Christian era, the intellectual Jews living in Alexandria used Greek, and those in Babylon the language of the Syrians. From the seventh century, for nearly 500 years, Arabic was spoken by the intellectual Jews, then Spanish and, to a certain extent, French. Modern Hebrew would therefore have to be formed for the use of the Jews in the nation of which the Zionist dreams. This would not be a practical way out of the difficulty, and I affirm that neither the formation of a new Hebrew language, nor the retention of the Jargon of the ignorant Jewish masses living in Poland as a national language, would contribute

one whit to their happiness, well-being or cultural progress.

“ But even in Palestine, before they were scattered over the earth, the Jews did not possess the national sentiments as we understand them to-day, for the simple reason that they did not exist at that time. This sentiment only began to appear with the Renaissance. Before that there were peoples rather than nations, and the word ‘fatherland’ had a strictly political meaning. The Jews discarded their language whilst they were still on their own territory. They finished their national career when nationalism had its chief stronghold in religion. Modern nationalism is absolutely strange to them; it does not emanate from their traditions or from their most brilliant era, and could not exist in the breasts of the ancient Jewish people because the very emotions which are understood under the word nationalism to-day did not exist then. The tragedy of the whole Jewish question in Poland lies in the fact that the leaders of the Jewish masses, instead of teaching them to cast off the *halat*, the Jargon and the *peasy*, and to make themselves like the other people of Europe whilst retaining all that is worthy in their customs and religion, use the revival to push them further and further back into separatism. Until they are pulled out of this pit of ignorance, assimilation, the only key to the problem, cannot be effected.”

## THE THIRD SPEAKER,

a Separatist, echoes the feelings of the ghetto at the present moment and says—

“The Jewish question in Poland is one of the gravest which the community has to face. Every one is agreed—I suppose—that in order to discuss a problem in connection with any part of the community, it is necessary to know something about that part. And yet the Poles, on the whole, know little or nothing about the Jews who have lived among them for so many centuries. To know assimilated Jews is not to know the Jews at all, for these people, who have left the race to which they once belonged, have absolutely nothing in common with them. Such only represent a very small proportion of the Jewish people, and not the whole Jewish nation in Poland. The days when units of this nation, thirsting for light and knowledge, were obliged to break away from their own, have gone—and for ever, for the gates of the ghetto are opened and its barriers broken down. A stream of light has penetrated into the Jewish hovels, and is chasing away the prejudices and superstitions born of the slavery of centuries. The Jewish people are changed; they are under the influence of a renaissance. They have awakened, and to-day we can see the first effects of the revival. The Jew now feels that he is a man; that he has a soul; that he commits a sin towards himself and humanity in misshaping it by trying to make it like other people’s; that it is a lie and a



debasement one to destroy his own individuality ; and that his own 'I' has the right to be and to assert itself. There is nothing strange or unnatural about this. We have other examples of a similar revival among the Lithuanians and the Ruthenians. The only difference is that people are not surprised at them, and think that the Jews alone have no right to assert their nationality. And so this revival of theirs is looked upon as something abnormal, as a fad or a whim of a few fanatics, as something which the masses do not feel. People in Poland are so fond of saying that the assimilation of the Jews in the country is the only way out of the Jewish question, that they forget to ask the most important factors in the process, the Jewish masses, what they think about it ; and, so far, they have been silent too. Now that they are beginning to have experience, and to think about their future at all, they plainly show that they do not intend to assimilate. True, they long to develop, to find light and knowledge, to live politically, to live as human beings ; but they want to do it in their own way. They know that they must work and suffer before they can attain their goal, but they want to work and suffer as Jews and not as Poles, for they will not give up that which is dearer than all to a nation, their own souls.

“ ‘There is not a Jewish nation !’ some people cry ; ‘they have not even got their own language.’ ‘What is this poor, obscure Jewish culture ?’ we hear others ask.

“My answer is, that the Jews are a nation, because they look upon themselves as such, and any given ethnical group has the right to choose whatever nationality it thinks fit. What determines nationality? Surely, amongst other things, language, customs, historical traditions, culture, and psychic characteristics. The hereditary language of the Jews is the so-called ‘Jargon,’ spoken by some millions of people. True, this ‘Jargon’ is a mixture of many tongues, a sort of patchwork of several elements, but that is a question for the linguists; a form of speech by which people can express their thoughts has every right to be called a language. The ‘Jargon’ has served the Jews for centuries; for centuries it has grown side by side with them, with their thoughts, hopes and longings, with their few joys and many sufferings. As the masses developed, so has it grown richer and developed its vocabulary. It has words for legends and fables, and words for philosophy and history.

“Its literature also has its history. The Yiddish pamphlets you see in the Jews’ hands to-day are not the first examples of written and published thought which the ghetto has seen. The first ‘Jargon’ writings appeared in Poland during the sixteenth century. They were mostly of a religious character, and included fragments of the Bible, commentaries to the Book of Job, translations of the Psalms, etc. As it chiefly served the lower classes of the people and women who did not know any Hebrew, the character of the literature did not

undergo any great change until the latter part of the nineteenth century. The second period contains a lot of novels and 'romances' of an erotic nature, written by people without much talent. The new generation of women, who had thrown off the traditions of their grandmothers and did not yet understand the new needs of their race, liked the scandalous novels which then appeared in Yiddish. It was only towards the end of the last century that the new era in 'Jargon' literature began, and writings formed on European models became popular. America was the centre of the new development. Hundreds of 'Jargon' papers, pamphlets and books were published there. The Jews in Poland, Russia, Lithuania, and Galicia followed the good example. But it was America that gave 'Jargon' literature its democratic colouring. One proof of the desire the Jews in Poland feel for national culture is the ever-increasing number of publishing firms and of the 'Jargon' newspaper circulation. The *Freind* had a circulation of 40,000 copies annually before it had been founded two years.

"Jewish culture is poor, I admit. But if richness of culture is to justify nations well endowed in forcing their spirit upon poorer nations, then the Prussians are justified in their policy of trying to stamp out all culture but their own. And yet all honest folk condemn their 'civilising' activity.

"All the Jew wants is to profit by modern progress in his own way, and not to give up his national indi-

viduality in order to benefit by the progress made by civilisation. He is confronted by all sorts of difficulties; by unwillingness and defiance. And why? Is a hard and fast method of training indispensable to human happiness? One so often hears it said that it is a sin to crush individuality; that a school ought to develop it; that its business is to make not dolls, but men and women. This rule ought to apply to all people and to all nationalities, and no less to the Jews. But there are rumours afloat that this Separatist theory is a dangerous one for the rest of the community; that it is hostile to it. Such rumours are entirely false. They are set afloat by those who, having left their own people, do not know anything about and therefore misjudge them. Do you really think that, because a Jew talks his own language, he cannot understand that others have their own hopes and aims, that he cannot understand other people's ideals? Do you really think that a Jew can become a 'man' only by casting off his own 'I,' and that the only culture which can raise the Jews in Poland is Polish culture? If the community at large has really become so imbued with the insipid ideas of the Judo-Assimilators, it is high time that such rumours, harmful to true Jewish interests, were dispelled. It is time that they got to know the Jewish masses better. Then they would find out for themselves that Jewish separatism has nothing in common with hostility. In a word, the Jewish masses want to live, feel they have the right to live, and are ready to fight for that right."



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

So far, the Separatists have the last word, because they are likely to hold sway in the ghettos and Jewish settlements of Poland for some time to come. Even the Assimilators admit that the realisation of their dreams has been indefinitely postponed by the revival among the Jewish masses. Mr. Alexander Kraushar, the historian, himself an Assimilator, fears that the influence of the Bund has postponed the process for a long time to come.

A great change is noticeable in the attitude of the Jewish population during the eight years I have spent in the country. To-day, one must go to the remote districts, where the absence of post and railroad and a long distance from the frontier make it difficult to spread new ideas, in order to find the old spirit which used to exist between the Polish and Jewish elements. Not only are the masses averse to assimilation—as indeed, they always were, but their latent, passive dislike of the Gentile has, during the last half decade, developed into active antagonism. They have realised that their aims and aspirations are at variance with those of the rest of the community, and, seeing the power they possess, exercise it to the utmost in order to realise their ambitions. In the large towns this hostility is often evident in the shops, *i.e.* in the quarter where the “goya” is the best customer. Here there is

the twofold hatred—that of the Jew for the Gentile, and of him who has little for him who has, or is supposed to have, much.

The missionaries who come to Poland from other countries have reason to complain of a similar change in the attitude of the people they attempt to preach to, and the number of their converts has fallen off considerably during the past few years. One cannot help wondering whether the good people in Western Europe know why the Polish Jew, for whose conversion they often give large sums of money, changes his faith. There are several reasons why he should do so. He is released from paying the communal tax, free to cross and recross the frontier even after a prolonged stay abroad, and has got rid of the word "Jew" from his passport. In a man of education, he is no longer under the restrictions which prevented him from becoming a member of the legal profession—for till recently only a certain percentage of barristers could be Jews. But the fact that some Jewish merchant comes to the missionary to be baptized does not make him change his life or begin to assimilate with the rest of the community. To all intents and purposes he is the same man as he was before, with the trivial difference that he keeps his shop open on Saturday and shuts it on Sunday. Can a leopard change his skin? He had ceased to attend the synagogue long ago, for really devout Jews do not fall into the hands of the missionaries. True, they will spend hours in arguing a point

with them, and enjoy the exercise immensely ; but only a man who is very sure of his faith will venture to do that. It is a common thing to hear a Jew say that he is not strong enough to argue with the adversary ; so he keeps away, for fear the missionary should overpower him with arguments. No, the religious man does not go to be baptized, as a rule. The neophyte is a practical person. He changes his faith either because he wants to free himself of the restrictions which the Russian lays upon his co-religionists, or else to escape the duties of his Commune. But the revival of the ghetto has made itself felt among his class also. Not only is public opinion stronger against him than a few years ago, when all but the most conservative devotees understood why he escaped the disabilities and restrictions whilst remaining at heart a Jew ; but the day of his civil deliverance is at hand, and he knows it. The part which his co-religionists are playing in the revolution assures him that he need no longer be baptized in order to get what he wants. Sometimes he is ready to meet his missionary with defiance ; for he always resented his intrusion, and does not hesitate to show it now that he can make no further use of him.

As to the well-to-do Jewish neophytes, they prefer to enter the Roman Catholic Church. It is a step nearer the Polish community, and, as he or she is generally baptized in order to be able to marry a Pole, the matter is considerably simplified. It is not a rare thing to find Jewish families in which one or two daughters are



Roman Catholics and married to Poles, whilst the parents still retain their old religion, are buried in the Jewish cemetery when they die, and leave money for memorial services to be held in the synagogue. The other daughters remain Jewish if they marry or intend to marry Jews, or become Protestants if they marry Englishmen or Germans. The sons, on the other hand, will not be in a hurry to change their religion unless the exigencies of their business require it, for unless they are very rich they will find it hard to get Polish wives. The Poles are usually averse to allying themselves by marriage with converted Jews or those of Jewish extraction; and though a bankrupt noble may do so under the pressure of debt, his sister will often prefer to remain single or poor rather than adopt a Jewish name.

But a change has come over the attitude of such Jews also in the matter of conversion, and in their relations with the Polish community. Not only have many of them withdrawn their names from charitable organisations which benefit the Polish poor, and ceased to take an active part in the movements started and supported by the Poles, but they do not get baptized into the Christian religion. There are to-day many rich Polish Jews who will give their children the advantages of a liberal European education, and forbid them to marry Poles and converted Jews. And often, though the members of the family can speak Polish, they use one of the several other languages they know at home.



Many Poles say that they do this because their accent—a relic of the ghetto and the Jargon—is not so noticeable when they speak French or English as in Polish. And yet there are still many Jewish houses where all the holidays of the Polish community are observed, where there is a tree at Christmas time and a feast with the traditional ham, eggs and sucking-pig at Easter (not, of course, consecrated by the priest), but where the members of the household are not baptized, although priests of the Roman Church visit them and are their confidential friends, to be appealed to in times of difficulty and trouble.

So neither the man who lives in the ghetto and wears a *haïat*, nor his brother who has bought a foreign title, is anxious to be baptized. Is it not because they know the day of their civil emancipation is at hand, because they know that before long they will be able to send their sons into the army, navy and civil service at their will, and be free to live all over the Russian Empire? Is it not because they know that their power, even now indisputable, will soon be acknowledged—that what has been their back-door influence will soon become that of the first places in the administration of the Empire? There is little doubt that, once their civil disabilities are removed, they come to the front in every walk of life; for even whilst hampered by disabilities they have a power no other race in the world possesses, a power the Jewish banker exercises on behalf of his poorest brother, a power nobody can overcome, for it is the power of

gold. Count Witte is reported to have told a Jewish deputation that whereas Germany is in the hands of the Jews, and the English monarchy supported by Jewish gold, the same thing would not happen in Russia, because the Tsar was determined to be the ruler of his own Empire. It does not matter whether the story is true or not; what does matter is that it echoes the spirit of Russian bureaucracy which would crush the progress of Jewish emancipation for very fear of the consequences to its own power. It is this fear which makes them oppose the efforts of those *Kahals* which strive to educate Jewish youths by establishing schools and fitting them to compete with their Russian and Polish rivals. An official in Warsaw also echoed the opinion of his class when he said: "The Government will not give the Jews civil rights if they can help it, because they are afraid. The Jews are much cleverer than we. They are everywhere, and doing everything. The Cadet Club in Petersburg is full of them; they are the life and soul of the meetings. The Russian members are indifferent or occupied elsewhere. When the Jews do get their disabilities removed—and the day will come sooner or later—they will rule the Empire officially. *De facto*, they are the masters at the present moment. The young men of the civil service who ought to be energetic and save the situation, are letting things slip through their fingers. All they think about is amusement and getting their salaries raised. They come to work late and go away early. When the Jew effects an entrance in their

midst, he will sweep them off the board like so many pieces of paper."

So much for local opinion. Meanwhile, the struggle which is convulsing the Empire sends thousands of Jews from the country. According to the latest statistics, more than 250,000 Jewish emigrants left Russia in 1905, as against 100,000 for the preceding year. Most of them were bound for England and the United States, and it is computed that 80% came from Poland and Lithuania. At one time only the economic failures and incapables, the men who were too ignorant or unhealthy to find work at home, used to emigrate. Now the political waste-products of the revolution have been added to them. It is with both these classes of immigrant, with the sweated tailor and boot-maker as well as the "politician" and the bomb-maker, that the English-speaking peoples have to deal.

However hospitable a host is, however addicted to keeping open house, he generally demands some particulars of the guests he receives under his roof. He likes to know a little of their characters, of their past lives and environments, of their aims and ambitions, for if he does not take precautions and secure their moral passport, he is in danger of discovering, when it is too late, that he is entertaining a thief unawares who has robbed him of his household gods, his domestic happiness—sometimes of his honour. So it is with nations. They owe themselves the duty of enquiring into the character and capabilities of the

strangers who settle among them, their reasons for immigrating, their civil and economic worth. For the same reasons, the English-speaking peoples should know something of those Polish Jews, who, from time to time, gather on their squares and embankments, bearing banners with Yiddish inscriptions, roaring hoarsely in a strange language, moving away from the police as from their natural enemies, and losing no opportunity of raising a shout against them.

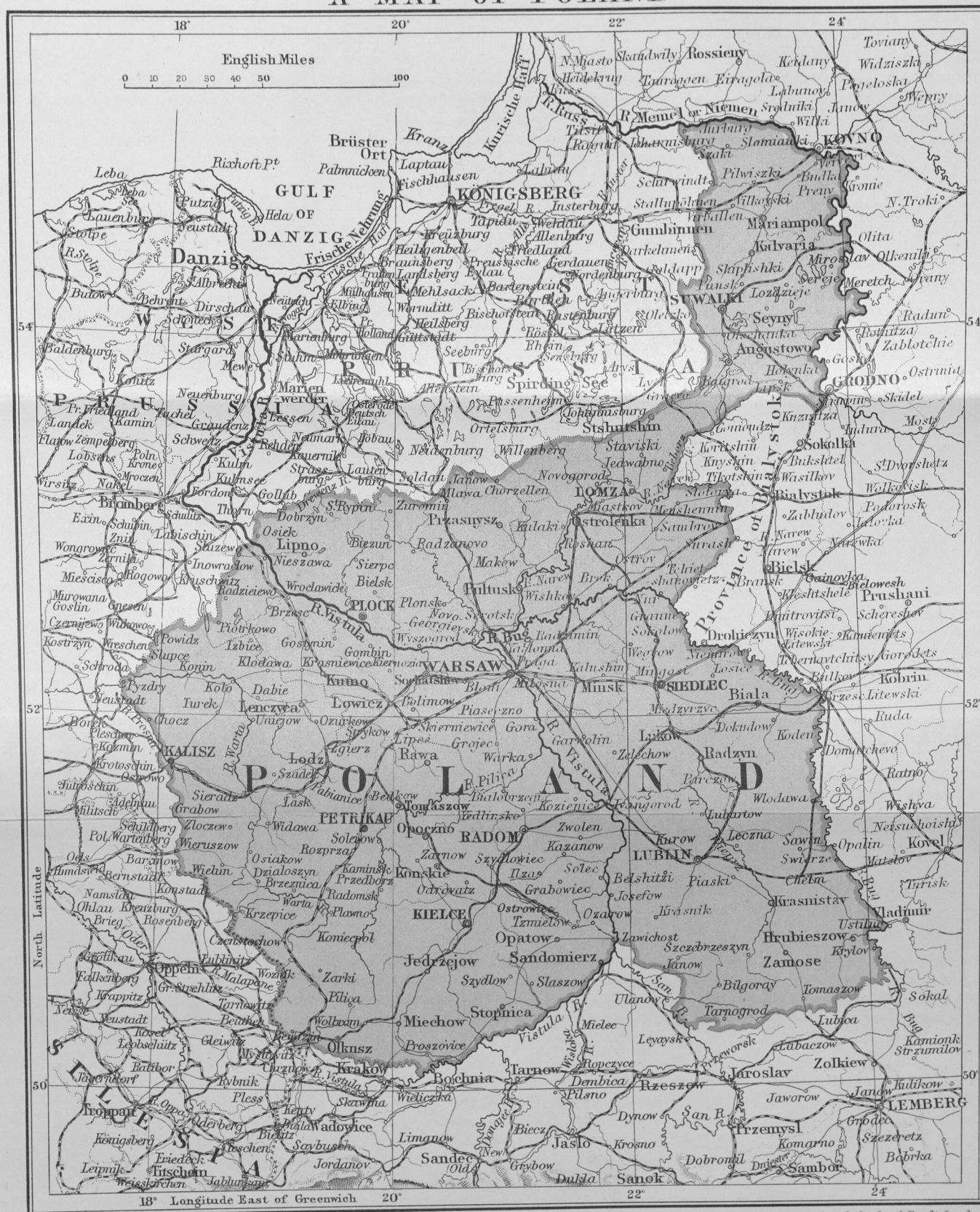
They have the right to know the general tendency of the Jargon papers which are distributed among the crowds on these occasions. More than this, they have the right to know why the people who compose these crowds left the land of their birth, whether they are likely to conform to the laws which bind the members of the community together, to raise or lower the moral standard of living in the land of their adoption, and to contribute, by their industry and their attainments, to the well-being of those classes with which they will be brought in contact.

It has been the aim of the preceding pages to answer, at least in part, these questions.

THE END



# A MAP OF POLAND



London: Chapman & Hall Ltd.

Stanford's Geog. Estab. London.